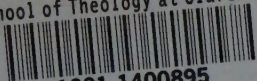


School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1400895

NATIONS NEED  
OF PROPHETS

BX  
5133  
S33  
N3

PAUL GIBBERTON, M.A.



The Library  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE  
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

byz

Indescrib



THE NATION'S NEED OF  
PROPHETS



*Series*  
PRESENTATION CO.

# THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

*Marked throughout*

By the Rev.  
F. A. SCREETON, M.A.  
VICAR OF SEACOMBE

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT  
ROXBURGHE HOUSE  
PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C

1917

*All rights reserved*

Theology Library  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT  
California

# CONTENTS

PAGE

## I

THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS . . .	1
-------------------------------------	---

## II

THE RELIGION NEEDED FOR TO-DAY . . .	13
--------------------------------------	----

## III

THE NEED OF REALITY AND SINCERITY IN NATIONAL LIFE AND CHARACTER . . .	27
---	----

## IV

THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG . . .	40
--	----

## V

HOME LIFE . . . . .	51
---------------------	----

## VI

THE NATION'S REGENERATION . . . . .	62
-------------------------------------	----



# THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

## I

### THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

"Let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream."—AMOS v. 24.

THE present time is one of unparalleled opportunity for men of Christian character and of high vision who would be ministers of prophetic righteousness and apostolic grace.

Great occasions demand strong leaders, and to-day we need prophetic leadership.

"Oh! for men with head and heart and hand

Like some great ones gone, for ever and for ever by.  
Men still, strong men in a blatant land,

Whatever you call them, what care I?

Aristocrat, autocrat, democrat, men

Who can rule and dare not lie."

The need of generals, admirals, munition workers, soldiers and sailors may seem the paramount need of the hour, but still the

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

history of nations shows that their destinies reside in prophetic leaders. The people who rejected the prophets and One greater than the prophets, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us," have

"Tost rudely o'er a thousand lands  
For twice a thousand years."

What qualities and what aims characterize the prophetic office that it should play so important a part in the shaping and direction of the course of events?

The prophets were "seers," that is, they saw a vision of God in His Holiness and Purity and Justice. They saw His hand in the history of nations, His judgments in the calamities which befell them. Having looked into the face of God, they were intolerant of the shams and frauds which deceived, and the injustices which injured the people of their country.

Prophets were not necessarily or primarily the predictors of coming events. Elijah, Samuel and St. John the Baptist are not recorded as having foretold anything of the future. The prophets were men who spoke for God and declared His Will and Judgment. They had a firm belief that they were the organs and instruments of the Most High.

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

They prefaced their utterances with the words, "Thus saith the Lord." They were men, like unto us, with similar emotions, feelings and passions, who threw the Divine thought into human words. They looked beyond the petty ambitions of men and the passing shows of life to deep realities.

They were men who looked at "life sanely and saw it whole." They were teachers of a spiritual religion and an elevated morality. They neither courted popularity nor feared criticism or opposition. They stood fearlessly before kings and peoples to deliver their message.

They were also social reformers. They attacked the social wrongs from which the poor suffered and denounced the selfishness of those who added "house to house and field to field," till the poor had no place to dwell in. Isaiah satirized the feminine vanities of his day with a description of them singularly appropriate and fitting to some of the fashions and adornments which have been in evidence in recent days.

The dominant note in the teaching of the prophets was the "holiness" of God. The Ruler of Israel and of Judah was the Holy One, Who inhabiteth eternity. Isaiah saw the Lord

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

sitting upon a Throne, high and lifted up, his train filling the Temple, while the Seraphim cried one to another, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts." The eyes of the Holy One were too pure to behold iniquity. That vision of Him Who sits on the Throne of Justice and Whose holiness was chanted by celestial beings was the source of the inspiration and courage of the prophets. It moved them to rebuke the delusion of the people who regarding themselves as the elect and chosen of God, assumed that they were raised above moral responsibility. Amos told the people of Israel that their position as the God's chosen people enormously increased their responsibility and did not endow them with doubtful privilege of being able to do evil and escape punishment. On the other hand, the message of the prophets was this, "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy." "You only have I chosen of all the nations of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities."

Still they were messengers of Hope. Hope shone through all their most terrible predictions. Their hearts never failed them even when giant forms of empire rose up and hurled their strength on the frail sides of Israel.

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

They never lost faith in the mission and future of Israel. They looked beyond the limits of their own country and were filled with a still larger hope for mankind. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together." They had a strong conviction of the ultimate triumph of goodness and Truth! There was a "Day" of God in the future, when all pride and insolence should be brought down and only the glory of the Lord should be exalted.

Lastly, they taught reality in life and religion. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God." "Righteousness exalteth a nation." What, asks Isaiah, is the meaning of this temple treading? That of itself is nothing, except you cease to do evil and learn to do well. "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; your new moons and sabbaths I cannot away with." These, the oblations and incense and new moons, were right and good if they were consciously recognized as outward evidences of real religious feeling.

Amos burst in on a great religious assembly and pealed forth his message in language of thunder in the ears of the astonished people,

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

"Thus saith the Lord, I hate, I despise your feasts . . . but let judgment roll down as the waters and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Ezekiel, too, gave the same message to Israel, "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O House of Israel? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord; wherefore, turn ye and live."

The last of the prophets, John the Baptist, on the banks of Jordan, proclaimed the same message, "Repent ye, repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Thus the prophets were men of spiritual and moral power, who called the nation to supreme realities and endeavoured to inspire them with new resolves.

The source of the old prophetic fire is still the same spirit of God. Unless it were so, it would be impossible to-day to stir the consciences of the people of our land. The words of the prophets were words forged in the furnace of Truth and hammered on the anvil of God. If we, who preach from the pulpits of the Church, are to influence the conscience of our nation, we must catch something of the old prophetic fire and feel upon us the powers of the world to come.

We need a prophetic ministry to-day.

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

Without the witness of the prophet human nature has ever fallen into crass materialism. When Moses went up into the mountain, the people began to worship the golden calf. When the voice of the prophets has been silenced in our own country the same thing has happened, and the people have had no higher ideals than "bread and the circus." We English people, with that habit of self-depreciation peculiar to us, sometimes speak as if materialism were the peculiar besetting sin of our nation, but it is not so. We find it everywhere and in every age. The Jews would have taken Jesus and made Him a king *after* He had fed the multitudes. They rejected Him with contempt when they found that His kingdom was not of this world. The prodigal son had hosts of friends while his money lasted and he could entertain them to dinner parties and otherwise give them "a good time," but when his money went out, his friends went out too.

The whole trend of prophetic teaching is to call people to REALITY. It aimed at leading men to look at life sincerely, to get people to see things in their right proportions. Matthew Arnold said, "All who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

for inspiration"; for the prophets held up all life, individual and national, to the light of the Truth of God.

They did not condemn ceremonies of worship as such, but only the idea that the mere performance of them was sufficient. They recalled men to the spiritual ideas of which the ceremonies were the embodiment. Indeed they turned the ceremonies into a language which could be understood and could be seen to convey the lofty truths of religion and life.

The prophets did not have an easy time. There were many forces linked together against them—those who had vested interests in wrong on the one hand, and the multitude, bent on gratifying its craving for pleasure and vice, on the other. Our Lord accused the forefathers of the race of stoning the prophets; yet these were the men who offered undying antagonism to all that hindered social redemption, or stood in the way of the regeneration of society. Would they have any better treatment to-day? Mark what powerful agencies have been on the side of drink and gambling, and how ill supported have been the efforts of those who would reform the world and the conditions of life. Look how money has been at hand in superfluous abundance

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

for the one and how hard it has been to get for the other.

England needs prophets to-day. As they came forth in the crisis of the history of other nations, so the present crisis calls to-day for the prophets. Well will it be if for the first time in the history of the Church, the Church herself and her priesthood can be the prophets.

Other nations have had their prophets besides Israel. What were Francis of Assisi and Savonarola and Mazzini in Italy but prophets? How the voice of Savonarola was raised in impassioned force against the tyrannies of his day, the sins of the Church and people! How courageously he prophesied the gathering thunders of God, how, like the prophets, he pleaded with his beloved city, Florence, to come and be healed and to throw itself on the mercy of God!

We have had our prophets. Alfred the Great in earlier days, Stephen Langton in the middle ages, and Thomas Carlyle in modern times were men who had an insight into the forces moving in society, and saw through the shams by which people were deluded.

We need men who are great in soul, men of wide vision, whose minds are not cramped, but can take a wise and generous outlook on

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

life. When we see so many who cannot imagine society being saved except by means of their party; when we see so many preferring expediency to right, and led by no higher purpose in life than what they can get out of it in money or amusement; when we see many of the habits of the people, we cannot help realizing the nation's need of prophets.

Has there not been a growing laxity which all lovers of country have deplored, and has not this been co-existent with a decline in religious education? Has not the rage for excitement been taking the sinews of industry out of us and unfitting men for the discharge of the lightest duties? Has not the sense of responsibility to God and man been in danger of dissipation?

In this day of great emergency, when we see the giant empires of the world locked in deadly encounter, we may well ask, what is to save England?

The prophets say, History says, with one voice, if England is to be saved it can only be by doing right! We cannot be strong except through righteousness.

There are people who ask whether religion has failed. They had better reflect that what we call civilization has failed, because it is

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

evident that forces which have brought about this war are not Christian or spiritual forces.

We had forgotten God !

Was there not evidence on every hand that God was forgotten, in London, Paris and Berlin ? Were not anti-Christian writers boasting that the churches were growing sparser of worshippers, was not religion openly spoken of as a matter of no concern to the working man ? Was not the population generally indifferent to the religious education of the children ?

Prophets are needed to recall the nation to God—men who will speak the plain and difficult truth without fear or dismay—men who will have a sure word to say about the Providence of God, the value of worship, the sanctity of marriage, the value of discipline and self-sacrifice.

We shall never be a true people fitted for government until we see in Law the rule of God, in Society the order of God, in Humanity the temple of God, and in History the march of God through the ages.

The voice of the prophet should be heard in every pulpit of the land ; his business it is to storm the consciences of the people, and to set their feet on the Rock of Sincerity and Truth.

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

Now, if ever, there comes to all the appeal to sincerity and reality. Would that all the Lord's people were prophets and knew the mind of God! Would that the gift of vision were poured out on all alike!

The call comes to us to-day to take a truer judgment into life, to be genuine, sincere and pure, for we live in God's world. It is His sun and moon and stars! It is His heaven above us! We therefore must live as belonging to Him!

Then will come new life to the nation, the Church and the home, and we shall see judgment roll down like the waters and righteousness as a never-failing stream.

## II

### THE RELIGION NEEDED FOR TO-DAY

“Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord ; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.”—MICAH iv. 2.

**I**T has passed into a commonplace that, after the war, nothing will be as it was before.

We shall undoubtedly be faced by problems requiring wisdom, patience and skill in the leaders of Church and State, and a vast amount of forbearance on the part of the nation at large. Business, social life, and religion will be face to face with the state of things which has survived the shock of war.

Grave as the commercial outlook will be, we may perhaps recover from the dislocation of industry more rapidly than we think. There is a greater resilience in modern conditions of commerce than could be the case a hundred years ago. We shall indeed be faced with the

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

burden of unparalleled national liabilities, but the burden can, to no small extent, be neutralized by greater prudence in living and by greater efficiency in our work.

In this address, however, I want to turn your thoughts to the subject of religion after the war.

We shall feel the need of religion after the war perhaps more really and acutely than we did before. Humanity, bruised and mangled, heartbroken and weary of conflict, will need a fresh vision of the everlasting Christ.

The Christian religion points us to the Personality of Christ as the great Example. While we may speak of a religion needed for to-day, we do not imply that a different religion from that of the Divine Son of Man is needed, but that we shall get to a truer and less confused conception of it. Have we had generally a true idea of the Personality of Christ? Has not religion had far less influence than it ought to have had, because even educated people, and Church-going Christian people, too, in many cases, have had a conception of Christ which is unlike that given to us in the Gospels?

In spite of much teaching to the contrary,

## THE RELIGION NEEDED FOR TO-DAY

*Christ / stern*

the character of Christ has not been associated with manliness and courage. He has been associated with a sweet gentleness, and presumed to be ready to forgive whether people deserved forgiveness or not. Religious pictures have perpetuated the idea, depicting the Christ as tender and gracious but never suggesting by any representation of Him that there was any resolution and courage. Gracious and tender indeed He was, but that does not by any means exhaust the whole spirit and temperament of Christ. You find Him, in a storm of anger, driving out the buyers and sellers in the Temple Courts, hurling fierce denunciations at the heads of the religious leaders of His day.

He sternly rebuked evil spirits, and when the man with the withered hand stood before Him, He looked round in anger on those who were watching Him with jealous and critical eyes.

There was a reproduction of a famous picture of Christ by Nikolai Ge in one of our Church newspapers a little while ago. It certainly gave no impression of prettiness. It represented a stern, resolute man, alive at once to the evils and needs of His day.

The real Christ stirs deep feelings within

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

us, and sets on fire a passion for righteousness. He is a real, vital stern Captain Who leads us in the great battle of life to attempt great things and to deal heavy blows at the forces of evil.

The idea of a pretty Christ, unmoved to anger, does not brace us for the stern realities of life. Christ was a strong and commanding Personality. Had He been otherwise, He would not have provoked the relentless hostility of the leaders of Church and State in His day. He was a man of action, a brave and knightly spirit, calling His followers to high and noble endeavour. When one said, "Lord, suffer me to go and bury my father," He said, "Let the dead past bury its dead." To another, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of Heaven." He had something else to do than to make allowances for the half-hearted, and to listen to "ifs" and "buts." "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

He, the greatest of prophets, like them, attacked the existing order in Church and State. His utterances against them were at times perfectly volcanic, hurled forth with passion and scorn—high explosive shells, which

## THE RELIGION NEEDED FOR TO-DAY

tore right into their entrenchments. We have no counterpart of such holy wrath in the whole of history.

Someone has said that the war has revealed the need of a new religion. It is not a new religion we need, but a fresh vision of the Everlasting Christ, presented to the conscience and imagination of the people. It is not a new Christ, but the real Christ that the age needs—the Christ Who is a great Leader of men, Who puts courage into our hearts and fire into our blood and inspires us to face the difficult tasks of life with hope and energy.

If we will listen to the voice of Christ, we shall find that He calls us to a life of service. We shall learn that we have to ask ourselves primarily not what can I get out of the life of the world, but what can I give to it. Then all the other things about which we are anxious will be added unto us, food and raiment. One of the chief effects of a knowledge of the real Christ will be a deepened sense of social responsibility all round. Every follower of Christ will seek to do his best work. He will accept and not shirk his obligations. He will be filled with a "Divine discontent" at the sight of the multitudes whose lives are spoiled by the prevalence and persistence of

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

those wrongs to which their circumstances offer them as an easy prey.

One of the great mistakes of modern days has been the effort to provide people with a religion made easy. There is, however, not sufficient strength about it to fortify them against the temptations, social and individual, which waylay them. Our water has been too soft and has not made bone enough for a race of giants.

Religion needed for to-day must have the ring of reality and sincerity about it. The world needs to see the "Christ in us." A religion of easy commonplaces is without vitality and will never inflame any heart, much less capture the world. It must be broad and deep—broad enough to embrace every form of human energy, every form of human sorrow and domestic and civil life—and deep enough to touch the springs of human motives.

(1) It must be attractive. The days have gone by when men could be driven to express their belief in this or that opinion. Christ said, "I will draw all men unto Me." The method of attraction is superior to the method of compulsion, though that is needed sometimes when dealing with those who have no sense of

## THE RELIGION NEEDED FOR TO-DAY

responsibility. We must make our churches to attract by their enthusiasm for goodness, their reality, their sympathy. They do not exist for purposes of denunciation. They need to be fearless in denunciation, in holy wrath like their Master's, when, like Him, they see the people victimized by vested interests in wrong. There are times when we must speak and spare not, only we have to be careful that our denunciation is not a selfish one, due to our impatience of other people, who will not accept our opinions. The greater work of the Church is to plead, to win, to draw and attract by the evidence of great and unselfish enthusiasms and by a large-hearted devotion to the work of social and individual regeneration.

The Church will never progress unless it lays hold on the imagination of the people. To some it stands for maintaining things as they are, or even for taking us back to the middle ages. To-day we look forward, and the Church, looking forward too, should be in the van of progress. The world is not won by the spectacle of parties inside the Church unable to agree, quarrelling about matters which to men who are in daily conflict with the strain and anxieties of life seem exaggerated and estimated out of all proportion

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

to their relative importance. Such quarrels within the Church, often characterized by bitterness and want of charity, produce the impression in the minds of the general public that a vast amount of intolerance and want of consideration are compatible with membership of the Church of Christ.

How much religion has lost by the quarrels of religious people on the subject of Disestablishment and Disendowment, and on the question of the character of the religious instruction to be given in the day schools, we shall never know, but that it has lost a great deal is not open to doubt. If these controversies are to be re-opened after the war they will need to be conducted with a greater toleration of opposing views, and with a greater exhibition of consideration and charity amongst Christian people.

The religious forces of the country can be brought into a greater unity without any sacrifice of principle, but this can only come by a great revival of real earnestness and religious reality in clergy and people. A sympathetic conception of the needs of the world would bring about a greater unity, and add wonderfully to the possibilities of the Church.

## THE RELIGION NEEDED FOR TO-DAY

(2) It must be marked by enthusiasm. The last thing that could be said of our Lord Jesus Christ is that He was ever dull. Religion deals with the greatest of all subjects ; it is full of vital interests ; it aims at nothing less than the transfiguration of human duties, and the redemption of the whole sphere of life. There is no room for dullness in a programme like this.

(3) It must be brotherly. It is a very common charge against Church congregations that the spirit of brotherhood is lacking. Strangers from another district may go to the Church in their new parish for months without any sort of welcome or recognition being extended to them. The Church would be none the worse for less of this stiffness, and a warmer and more friendly atmosphere could be created without going to the opposite extreme of effusiveness and fussiness.

The men who come back from the war will have seen into the realities of things, their spirits will have been hardened in the fierceness of the conflict. They will not be vain carpet knights, but men who have faced death day by day, who have gone on terrible enterprises and have seen many of their comrades dying heroic deaths swept out of life by the whirlwind of war.

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

Hymns which suggest the idea that life is all a mistake will not appeal to them. If they are to be influenced by religion afterwards, it must be what it was meant to be—a power, a discipline, and an inspiration to enable them to carry the same heroic spirit into the great tasks of life.

(4) *It must be prophetic.* It is in the Church that the voice of the prophet should be heard. The Church is called upon to be the prophet to the nation. The message of the Church must involve a hearty challenge to the conscience of the nation. The standard of the Gospel is the true measure of our personal and political ideals. It is needed to form and influence public opinion, to purify all our social, civic and commercial life, to lift them on to a higher level and fill them with a truer spirit. We need so to storm the national conscience, by a new and vigorous appeal to the standards of the Gospel, that in future truth will not be sacrificed to party interest in either Church or State, or the welfare of the people bartered for to powerful vested interests, or the health and vigour of the next generation sacrificed for the want of plain speaking and brave judgment, and the honour of womanhood degraded because of a false

## THE RELIGION NEEDED FOR TO-DAY

and feeble sentiment about the liberty of the subject.

There has come a new and great opportunity to call the whole nation to apply new and better standards to the needs and problems of our day, unhampered and unmoved by partisan or selfish interests. We must not, we dare not, let the opportunity pass by without a determined effort to use it.

(5) More devotion to the mind of Christ. We have not been loyal enough. We have been more concerned with our own particular views than with the Rule of Christ. We have been concerned with the effort to find Christ on our side rather than with the effort to put ourselves on His. Now is the time to make our way through all the clouds of controversies which have separated Christians down the ages till we stand before the Living Christ of the Gospels—that we may see Him as He is, and not as our preconceived ideas would make Him out to be.

One of our great admirals has said, " Surely Almighty God does not intend this war to be just a hideous fracas. There must be purpose in it all. France has already shown the way. She has risen out of ruined cities with renewed religion. Russia is welded into

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

a whole, and religion plays the greatest part. England still remains to be taken out of the stupor of self-satisfaction and complacency in which her great and flourishing condition has steeped her."

If Europe is to be redeemed it will not be by might nor power, but by the spirit of the Living God. The heart of Europe is sad and broken, and it is the business of God's Church to gladden it with hope and point it to a Resurrection from despair and misery to life and joy. Not only is there the opportunity of infusing a religious spirit anew into modern life, but there is hope.

There is more religious feeling and sentiment in the world than we are apt to imagine. There is a real belief in the value of the human soul, in the equality of man in the sight of God, and in the Universal Fatherhood of God. There is an increasing sense of duty and a greater readiness to sacrifice than we thought. A nation which has not been compelled to military service, but has spontaneously risen to the height of sacrifice, is a nation whose heart is sounder and more open to the highest influences than we perhaps thought before. The Church is a witness to the sovereignty of those very ideals. She has been on the sacred

## THE RELIGION NEEDED FOR TO-DAY

mountain, and it is her business to bring the High Vision she has seen before the eyes of the people.

We are to find new depths of meaning and new sources of strength in Him. After all that has happened the Cross stands out in more marked contrast than ever to pitiless hatred, savage aggression, violence and revenge. Maeterlinck reminded us that the great thorn-crowned Figure on its wayside Calvary confounds and will confound the princes of the world as they advance on the road to ruin.

It did so in old days, and in the old days it proved to be a new and regenerating force in a decaying empire. It can be so in ruined Europe to-day. "The Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save."

An immediate responsibility rests upon us gathered here, as on every Christian congregation, to show forth as best we can the high spirit of our religion.

Religion is due to the voice of God within us. It is a power which allures and attracts us to the Vision of God. It inspires us to do the duties of life. It fills us with an enthusiasm for goodness. It stirs our hearts to spread blessings on every hand. It sustains us in the

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

monotony of daily tasks. It gilds them with the glory of Heaven. It opens our eyes to the beauties of the heavens above and the earth beneath and to the meaning of both. It fills our souls with a great and enduring love of man. It arms us with courage to strike blows at evil. It gives to the morn of life its natural blessedness. It strengthens young people starting out into the world with high hopes and lofty enthusiasms. It sanctifies marriage. It sheds its radiance in the home. It lights up the evening skies of life with glory of promise. It comforts you in sorrow. It whispers words of solace to those tossing in pain. It binds up broken hearts, and at last, it takes you by the hand when you are entering into the Valley of the Shadow, leads you on and places you at last in the presence of the Eternal Reality.

### III

## THE NEED OF REALITY AND SINCERITY IN NATIONAL LIFE AND CHARACTER

“ Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light ? even very dark, and no brightness in it ? ”  
—AMOS v. 20.

THE size of a country or empire is no guarantee that it will last. Old empires braved the storms of centuries and then crumbled into the dust. Slowly and with painful effort the fabric was reared which was to give security and comfort. Armies and navies were organized to defend it or to extend its frontiers. Cities were reared to be the pride and boast of the conquerors, and then the storm came down and one more empire went to join those which had already passed into an oblivion which only left at most a name.

No efforts of a material kind can secure any empire against decay.

The prophets never ceased to deny that knowledge, power or wealth were the end of life or the primary needs for a nation's good

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

or glory. These indeed might be the occasion of serious dangers to its permanence and life unless they were wisely used.

What has knowledge led to? It has indeed done much for which we are grateful, but it has also perfected the instruments with which man slays his brother, with an ingenuity which is almost devilish. Almost the first use to which the conquest of the air has been put is the destruction of life and property.

What has power resulted in? In the case of Germany, in an insolent defiance of Europe and a contempt of other nations.

And wealth? How frequently has that produced envy in a country's neighbours and lured its own people to an enervating luxury.

You see in Germany a nation physically fit, well-organized, boasting of its "Kultur," scientific and resourceful, yet deifying "force." Materially it had left nothing to chance in its preparation for war, but by a fatal lack of vision, it overlooked the spiritual forces which count more formidably than any other factor.

It is not for us to be Pharasaic and to thank God that we are not as these Germans. We, too, have our failings. Not long before the war a celebrated London preacher said that as a nation England was not fit for empire, and

## NEED OF REALITY AND SINCERITY

that is precisely what the Germans have been saying for many years. We have offered incense at strange shrines. We have worshipped display, appearances, pleasure and money getting. We have been strangely blind to our responsibilities and to great social sins which exist on every hand. We have been covetous and wasteful. While we have condemned Germany as a godless nation, we were increasingly leaving God out of account. We have allowed the drink trade to become so powerful that it has almost become the despair of statesmen. We were multiplying the least efficient and shiftless part of the community more rapidly than any other class, and a selfishness had eaten into the other classes of society so completely as to be rapidly leading to class suicide.

Party spirit was marked by a bitterness which no living person remembered to have been greater. Party politicians were much more concerned about a party victory and party success than about the national welfare. A great deal of unchristian bitterness between Churchmen and Nonconformists had been created by the proposals for the disestablishment of the Welsh Church. The temper amongst the working classes was ominously

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

menacing, and but for the war, we should possibly have witnessed a serious social upheaval.

Are the men who have fought side by side, facing death together, who have tasted the glory of sacrifice, to come back, only to see these fierce bitternesses renewed? Politically, ecclesiastically and socially these rivalries were so uncompromising as to leave no room for the operation of any counsels of prudence and forbearance.

In British politics we have had our own Junkerdom in allowing the rule of the party majority in power to become a tyranny and a despotism as real as Prussian militarism. Divisions of opinions about important matters and parties will be with us after the war. Even a great war will not produce uniformity in thought and action. That, indeed, is neither necessary nor desirable, but we may well hope that the fierceness and bitterness which accompanied division of opinion will be burnt out in the fires of war, and the old problem, as well as new ones, be met in a new and better spirit. We shall need in public men and in the nation at large a spirit of patience, with almost unlimited forbearance to build up our country again. We shall need men who are much more concerned

## NEED OF REALITY AND SINCERITY

about the soundness of the national life than the greatest of party victories.

One other feature of our ordinary life was wastefulness. It seemed to be a point of honour with people not to be careful and economical. In the ordinary estimate even true economy was suspected of being insidiously mean. It was a national fault which was doing grave harm to the national life.

Waste increases cost of living, as labour and material and time are needed to make good the waste which might otherwise have been used for production of useful things. All waste has to be made good ! I remember in a discussion on economic questions at the Labour Church in Hyde, one speaker argued that it was for benefit of working classes to make " good waste," and he therefore supported the drink trade. " Good waste " is a contradiction in terms. Waste is not good, or it would not be waste.

We had the reputation of being the most drunken nation in the world. The charge may not be true, but one is reminded of the saying of a foreigner, " It is a good thing for us that you Anglo-Saxons are a drunken people for such is your energy and ability that otherwise you would be easily masters of the world."

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

In the name of a false liberty we have allowed the "Trade" gradually to possess itself of privileges possessed by no other trade in the country. John Ruskin said, "The encouragement of drunkenness for the sake of profit is the most barbarous device ever practised by the bravadoes of any age or country."

The gambling mania was never so widespread as in the days before the war. Every class of society was seriously infected by it, and the demoralization of character in consequence was going on apace. The gambling spirit which embodies the hope of "getting something for nothing" cannot but deteriorate man's outlook on life, increasing the tendency to slackness and taking any serious determination out of the work of life. No wonder that our national life exhibited a marked indifference to any claims or duty or responsibility. This was apparent in home life and in the productive work of the community. Few realized the importance of home culture, and few seemed disposed to acknowledge the duty of every worker to do the best work of which he was capable. Whatever else may be said about it, it is certainly not the temper which makes a great or imperial people.

All these national faults and failings, which,

## NEED OF REALITY AND SINCERITY

if continued and unchecked, spell national decay, were accompanied by a fast growing forgetfulness of God.

Can we wonder that with a decreasing sense of responsibility, and an increasing disregard of the restraints of religion, that we found a disposition in various large sections of opinion to resort to force to get their way, any respect for the law being regarded as weakness. Yet this appeal to force is precisely what we have been condemning in the Germans. Here we had the gospel of force in full swing. Churches, private and public buildings were burnt down to intimidate the Government; men were arming in Ireland; and a war on the public was threatened by various sections of working-class opinion. These various causes which resorted to "force" to win their objectives will still be with us after the war is over, but we shall surely have learnt to discuss them in a new and better spirit.

An acute observer of society has said that we need "a changed spirit in all departments of our national life."

We need new vigour, self-sacrifice and patience. We have been called upon as a nation to fight for great national ideals. This, of itself, is calculated to infuse a higher tone

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

into life, and in face of this awful carnage, life and death appear in their true reality, and demand that shams and affectations and trivialities should vanish into a well-deserved oblivion.

The war calls us to sincerity. All the nations are appealing to the God of battles, each pretending to neutrals that it is fighting for righteousness. There is no doubt that the English people sincerely believe that they have taken up arms in a "spiritual conflict," but it is undoubtedly a time when, as a nation, we should seriously inquire into the sincerity of our motives, not only in undertaking a great part in this world conflict, but in our life in general, as citizens of the Empire, and as neighbours in our municipal and social life.

It is estimated that there are five thousand tramp children in the country utterly uncared for. There is a decreasing birthrate, which spells a selfish interference with the laws of God, and a sacrifice of the responsibilities of home to pursuit of comfort and pleasure. Yet how is a nation to live without the children?

There are no great blessings in store for a nation which has become tired of the children. Goldsmith said very truly—

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

## NEED OF REALITY AND SINCERITY

Men are decaying where child life is not wanted.

We need more self-discipline in national life. We have allowed the craving for amusement to run riot. Some shrewd observer said several years ago that there was no more pathetic spectacle in the world than the British public being amused ; it occupied too much of the thought and time of the people and a large part of the amusement was not edifying. The time given to recreation has increased out of all proportion to our physical needs.

The want of discipline can, no doubt, in some measure be traced to the idea, so liberally fostered in the middle of last century, that every man has the right to do as he likes, instead of doing what he ought.

The craving for luxury and comfort needs restraining. The standard of luxurious living has been too high. It has been argued that it is good for trade, but that is unsound economics. It is not good for trade—it is good for nothing. If a rich man spends thousands of pounds on a gorgeous house-party, he employs labour indeed, but there is nothing left to show for it but perhaps an abundance of headaches next day. The money would have been better employed in something of more permanent

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

value to the community. Whenever workers are producing useless things, they are preventing other workers from producing useful things. It is, no doubt, a question of proportion, as some of the wealth of the community is legitimately spent in bringing cheerfulness into life and in promoting happy social intercourse and friendship.

This is where our failings lie. We have put the wrong things in the first place. Christ put first things first. "Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

The present, therefore, is a time to consider our ways and to attempt to get things into their right lights and proportions. It is a call to national repentance. We were fast becoming a country unfit for empire. We need to repent of our sin in allowing this nation to be weakened with the blight of drunkenness. We need to repent that we have allowed one-quarter of our population to live continually on the verge of starvation. We need to repent of our selfish and inconsiderate pursuit of pleasure, which has involved us in giving less to life than our best, and we need to repent that in and with all these we have forgotten God.

## NEED OF REALITY AND SINCERITY

It is not, however, sufficient to mourn over the past. We have to set our hands to the task of building up a new social order. We cannot go on under conditions of life which we have tolerated for so long. These things—healthy living, care of child life, social responsibility, education in character as well as in knowledge, true and honest service—are most vital and important matters. The national life can only be lifted to a higher level by our interpreting the principles of Christ into life.

Will the Church lead? Will she take her place in the van of progress, and throwing all calculations as to her own safety to the winds, call the nation from luxury and gross materialism to a better and nobler style and method of living? Our religion must be a reality if it is to be powerful enough to do this.

Are we going to make the attempt to sweep life clean of foul wrongs and abuses? Are we to fight for Belgium and Serbia, and not bring in a fairer England too?

We cannot do this without effort. What are you doing? Good does not naturally come out of evil. The war has no magic power of purifying nations. Nothing but hard work and sound thinking will be of any avail to save us.

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

Dickens tells us in *Bleak House* of one Jobling who trusted to "things coming round." They do not come round, they have to be brought round, pulled round, and to make a better England we must give to the task our best thought and energies.

Many were pessimistic enough to say that Britain's day was over. It is not over—it is only beginning—if we do not seek to consume our energies in the struggle for abounding riches and commercial supremacy simply, but, on the other hand, are more anxious for moral greatness. There are noble tasks for the country to perform, and it is possible for England to perform them, if she is true to herself and her mission.

Men are fighting for England to-day. What England are they fighting for? She has become an ideal in their minds, which calls them to the sacrifice of all that is dear and precious in life. Surely all this precious sacrifice of life is not to be in vain. Only one thing can reward it and that we need for future reality in national life and character. We need to get rid of pretence, which spoils our naturalness, the shams by which we are deceived, the adoration of health, and the love of vulgar display.

## NEED OF REALITY AND SINCERITY

The conscience of the nation needs to be appealed to as never before. Character—sound and true—is our greatest need. No material prosperity can make up for it. England will be greater after the war, if, after losing much, she has found her own soul.

Pray then that the nation may grow stronger in the path of duty, that she may have courage to lay aside what is trivial and rise to nobler views of the seriousness of life and destinies of men. Pray that England may be filled with great and noble-souled people, for a nation's true riches are in its people, and the standards by which they govern their lives.

Men, not walls, make the city. Our greatness does not consist in numbers, but in the sort of men and women that we are. Power and greatness come through purity and the discipline and affection of countless homes.

The prophets of old stormed the conscience of the people of their day and called them to the ideals by which a nation could alone fulfil its destiny and live its life. Their message was not temporary or local. It sounds in our ears to-day, and never more than to-day was it needed that we should listen to the prophet who said ages ago that "Righteousness exalteth a nation."

#### IV

### THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG

“How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?”—JUDGES xiii. 12.

THE Greek word for boy suggests an educational process. It comes from a root which means “to strike.” The word does not suggest violence, though there seems to be an inherent tendency in every boy to strike another boy at times. The nearest equivalent in English is “discipline,” or the continued application of rules which help to development. How is this to be done? How are we to develop the child, and realize its powers? It will not be by trying to form it so that it will exactly resemble some other child. That method is a wrong one. Each child has a life of its own, which, though like the life of many others, has also its own peculiar powers and possibilities. There are two

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG

methods to be used in the effort to evolve these, "education" and "instruction." By education (as the word implies) you try to bring out that which is within; by instruction you give from without the food necessary to strengthen and nourish the life, which is already there.

By the very nature of the child, you are called upon to treat it as a religious being. The capacity for religious truth and feeling is there. You have not to create it. Your task would be hopeless if you had. It is when it loses sight of its God-derived life that humanity becomes divided and broken. All the nations at war with one another are evidence of the failure of humanity to find its unity in God. St. Paul laid down the cardinal principle of human life when he said at Athens, "He hath made one all the nations of the world."

The various races differ in many externals, in bodily appearance, in mental capacity, in temperament, in adaptability, but they do not differ in spiritual essence. There is unity throughout human nature in spiritual pose.

In every child you see a creation of God, waiting for the inpouring of Divine life, and its development by Divine power.

I need not argue about the necessity

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

of religious education. We realize that to train a child in what are called secular things only, and with a secular spirit only, is to leave its real nature untouched. In order to develop a child in accordance with the truth of its God-derived life, you need the Revelation of God ; you need to teach it to see that Revelation in nature, in the history of man, and in the longings, aspirations and movements of its own soul.

Children, as they grow up, look out upon this strange and changeful life with eyes of wonder, and it is for us to lay hold of that growing intelligence so that they may see in the face of nature the Glory and the Providence of God, and trace the shining of His Face in the splendours of the world around.

They will learn to see the purpose of God working itself through the history of our race. Experience, as life goes on, will confirm the words of Tennyson—

“ Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing  
purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widened with the  
process of the suns.”

That gives a width and breadth to the outlook on life of developing manhood and womanhood that can be acquired in no other way.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG

In this way they will learn to find every study a sacred study. We are in the habit of drawing a sharp distinction between secular and religious studies, but every secular study is also a sacred one, and every sacred study is a secular one because it supplies ideals for life. Geography and geology are sciences which deal with God's world. The geography of Palestine is not the only one which a Christian ought to know, and Palestine is not the only Holy Land. Every land is a holy land and every country consecrated soil. To know and love England is part of our duty as God's Englishmen and Englishwomen, and to know the spots of English soil which have marked the origin and progress of religion or of the nation's life is an education for Christian people. The history of a nation is a sacred study.

So with literature. The books of the Bible are in the supremest sense sacred, because they are all permeated with spiritual and ethical ideas, and the history in the Bible is written from a strictly sacred and ethical standpoint, but literature which unfolds the heart and imagination of human life, and gives an account of the progress of the various families of God's children in this world, are sacred too.

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

It has taken us a long time to arrive at any sane ideas about education. The old system took little account of the capacity of the child. The principle adopted by our education authority was "payment by results." The business of education was to cram the mind of the child with memorized facts. This is not a method which develops. It sterilizes.

Knowledge is power and illuminative, when it influences the life, and when its discovered resources are translated into life. We have been slow in England to learn this. In Scotland for three hundred years a method of education (widely spread over the whole country) has given Scotsmen an immense advantage in competition with other nations. Though the whole population of Scotland is not much more than half that of London, in every department of life Scotsmen have led the way. If England had been educated as Scotland has been even for half that period, we should have had nothing to fear from German or American competition. We have erred on the side of making things too easy for the young, and too much ease breeds softness. We ought not to wrap up the children, so to speak, in cotton wool, and remove every difficulty out of the way. They will not be fit for the conflicts of

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG

life by methods such as these. Difficulties are a challenge to their powers. Our interest in them is to stimulate their powers and to awaken them to action rather than to make their path too easy. We need to foster the heroic spirit, the spirit of adventure, and to awaken healthy and quickening aspirations.

Is it not specially important at the present time that the children should be brought up with intelligence and wisdom? Is there any work of greater value to-day?

They will have a new world to face for which they will need stout hearts and wise and understanding minds. I am not urging that they should attempt to put old heads on young shoulders, or that the morn of life should be robbed of its natural blessedness. I simply urge that the age of ease and irresponsibility is not to be wasted and unattended by that instruction and discipline which the long years of after life make necessary and useful.

Enormous responsibilities will fall upon the school children of to-day in their later years. They will have reached middle age before the havoc done by this war will be remedied, if indeed it is remedied so soon. They will be called upon to play their part in an England different in many respects from the England

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

we have known. They will have to face the enormous financial burden which is being built up. Another generation will not see the end of the cost in money or the end of the consequences due to this abnormal loss of life. Is it indeed safe to attempt any prediction as to the length of time it will take us and other nations to recover from this greatest tragedy in the world's history?

Let me mention three things especially needed in the training of the young to-day.

(1) *Efficiency*. How is this exceptional future to be met unless young people to-day are trained to be efficient, encouraged to do their best, and inspired with a true idea of service. The burdens left to them by this war will only be neutralized by increased efficiency and by a larger devotion to duty. There is ample room for both, without overstraining the powers of those who will succeed us in the work and government of the country in the future. Large volumes of power have been running to waste, and much energy has been spent on useless and unprofitable work which in the future may well be dispensed with.

(2) *Patriotism*. They need to be bred in patriotism, not indeed the false patriotism which says, "My country, right or wrong," but

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG

a patriotism which claims for one's country the opportunity of contributing a worthy share to the world's civilization. We ought to teach children the names of the great servants of the race to which they belong, statesmen, travellers, governors, philanthropists, reformers, sailors and soldiers. What inspiration there is in names like Isaac Newton, Shakespeare, Milton, Captain Cooke, Nelson, Wellington, Gordon, Tennyson, Wordsworth !

How proud a British boy should be when one of his race has done a great thing, not proud with a scorn of others, but proud of the achievements of his race. It is the duty of the Church to preach a lofty patriotism which burns like a sacred flame in the hearts of her children. They will realize that those who have gone before endured hardness and did not quail at any sacrifice to leave them a great and noble England, which comes to them with the marks of sacrifice and self-denial. They will inherit a story of their land which tells of unparalleled hardness and suffering and the record of tens of thousands who have died that they might live. The England of the future will have a greater and more powerful claim upon the hearts of the people, because it comes to them rich with the glory of sacrifice.

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

(3) *Piety*. We need, I make bold to say, a more austere morality.

Stricter discipline is needed in the homes of the land than is generally found to be the case to-day. No doubt our grandfathers went too far, but the reaction from their over-strictness has gone much too far also. It has been more or less accepted as true that if the children are brought up strictly they break away later on and fall into more or less wild excesses. This is far from being true in actual experience. If discipline is brusque, ill-tempered and terrorizing, without doubt it may and does do harm; but discipline which is exercised firmly, with sympathy and kindness as well, is a valuable contribution to a child's experience. Those who have been brought up in a strict and austere morality are better equipped for the battle of life against every form of evil. There is no greater asset to a child in starting out in the world than noble and serious parents. Children, in later years, remember them with a whole-hearted respect; and honour them for their effort to give them the greatest of all endowments, a fine moral constitution. This does not mean that parents are to be "killjoys," unless it be the case, which undoubtedly it is not, that happiness is

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG

only found in loose and unrestrained living. Children bred in piety and in conscientious regard for others make the men and women of a great nation.

It is part of our duty then to repress the evil which may poison their lives. Once in a London square a gentleman was observed carefully crushing several red berries which had been dropped on the pavement. Some one asked him the meaning of this ruthless proceeding and he said, "The berries are poisonous, but children would not know that, so it is best to destroy them, lest they should pick them up and eat them."

This is part of our responsibility to the young people of our day. The other part is in a wise and skilful direction and choice in the matter and method of their education.

Everything points to the necessity of a reconsideration and a revision of our educational methods. The education of children is a matter of such unquestioned importance for the future of State and Church that we must take it into account in any efforts at reconstruction.

"Train up a child in his way," so the injunction runs, to be correct. The words suggest development from within. There can

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

be no evolution without involution. You cannot evolve what is not involved already. A child is a potentiality to be realized. Plato left the same theory of the human mind and heart. What shall this child be?

There are almost infinite possibilities within it for good or evil. How carefully and sympathetically it should be trained. There is a life within to evolve and it will not be rightly evolved except under sympathetic direction.

A great orator in speaking of this department of human life said, "It is an eternal work. Work on marble and it will perish. Work on bronze and time will efface it. Build great temples and nature will begin at once to raze them to the dust, but work on the lives of children, fill them with great principles of action, with the fear of wrong and the love of right, and you engrave on those tablets something which no time will ever eradicate and no changing centuries will ever efface."

## V

### HOME LIFE

“Let them first learn to show piety at home.”  
—I TIMOTHY v. *β. 4*

IN our last sermon we were insisting on an education of children which should be more in accordance with the truth of our human nature.

There is another factor which has no second place to fill in the equipment and development of the young for the future—and that is the Home. There is no institution whose influence is so important in its effects on the physical, moral and spiritual development of the race.

If we are to discern “purpose” in the history of man on this earth, it would seem, on looking back over its records, that all the previous struggle of the race leads to the home, as its chief aim.

What an education the home is. The coming

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

of the child into the home—what a new set of relations it involves. The dependence of the little infant and its helplessness are a stronger protection to it than the drawn sword or than armed battalions. At once all the mother's care and tenderness are called into play and the father's sense of rule and responsibility.

Animals come ready equipped for carrying out their life work, but man has a long infancy which means that his latent powers have to be evolved and trained. Life is for him an education.

We see in the Bible the supreme importance attached to parental and filial relations. It is nowhere more apparent than in the example of our Lord. From the old Law we get the fifth commandment, which is the only one not put in a negative form and the only one to which any earthy blessing is attached. In the New Testament we see this ancient command consistently and beautifully illustrated in the life of the Son of Man. He has left us in no doubt of the estimation in which He held the life of the Home. He was in no hurry to leave it.

Though the work that lay before Him was nothing less than the redemption of the world,

## HOME LIFE

and His message and teaching were sorely needed to give new life to the race and to change the currents of its history, yet He remained in silence and obscurity in His village home at Nazareth for thirty years. He went forth to His great and unparalleled work with the sweet influences of the home upon Him and saturated by its gracious ministries. He submitted Himself with loyalty and bravery to its restraints. "He went down to Nazareth . . . and was subject unto them."

It is characteristic of the age in which we live to revolt against any form of restraint, and young people of our day are eager to slip the bridle of authority. This tendency, no doubt, existed quite as strongly in days gone by, but there was far less opportunity of its successfully defeating authority. Modern conditions give greater facilities for rebellion against the rule of the home.

This overweening passion for a spurious freedom from restraint, the refusal to accept the obligations and duties of home life which make for our highest development, is producing a gradually deteriorating effect on individual and national virtue and strength.

There are other factors at work which

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

menace the home. Some, in the avowed interests of social reconstruction, deny its need for the future. The State, they say, is the unit and not the family. The home stands in the way of universal brotherhood. It is a stronghold of selfishness ; its barred and bolted door must be broken down. No more shall every man's home be his castle. You cannot love all men if your affection is concentrated in the few in your family. This is part of a superficial philosophy which menaces the stability and existence of home life.

It is not true to actual experience, nor agreeable to common sense. St. John asked, somewhat indignantly, how a man could love God whom he had not seen if he had not first loved man whom he had seen ? Similarly, we may ask how can we take the world of man to our hearts as a brother if we have not already learnt what it is to have a brother and love a brother in our own homes ?

Harold Begbie, in *The Distant Lamp*, tells the story of a children's crusade, and how a weird, ominous voice pierced through the barren streets of a great city, saying, " Look to the children." We may well listen to the warning voice which tells us to beware of any insidious teaching, and to suspect any philo-

## HOME LIFE

sophy which would lead us to sacrifice the home. "Look to our homes." The well-being of the future is gravely menaced if we allow the rights, the sanctity, the power of home life to be invaded.

The home is wrought into the very fibre of our human life. It is the place whose relationship and discipline fit us for a worthy manhood or womanhood. It is the sphere where ideas, tastes, habits are formed which blossom into character. The qualities formed and demanded by home life are just the qualities needed for the life of the city and country. The preservation of the home ought to be one of the fundamental concerns of government. The conditions of home life should be one of the gravest concerns in the minds of our statesmen.

"Are all the children in," asked an aged dying mother in her wanderings of mind. She was thinking of earlier days when the whole family were living together under the old roof. Fathers and mothers ! are all the children in ? That surely is your most anxious concern. Are they in, in the sense, that the training, discipline, shelter and love of true home life is acting upon your young lives and bringing them to a strong manhood and a gracious womanhood ?

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

When one messenger after another came to tell David of the successful quelling of Absalom's rebellion, he kept asking, Is the young man Absalom safe? Yet many thousands are growing up amid the curses which to-day in our own England blight and disfigure society. There are children beaten, kicked, starved and cursed in our great cities, growing up in drunken and dissolute homes, if they may be called homes. They live in surroundings whose squalor is accentuated by the presence of gaudy public houses, offering as one writer has put it the maximum of temptation to the minimum of resistance. We have allowed the door of hope of better things to be closed, for if any of these unfortunate ones should ever have any such aspirations there is a public house at each end of the street, to challenge their effort to escape into a larger and better life. Thus are they plunged from the first into an old and clever world, and though of late years the State and public opinion have not been altogether indifferent to the child life of the country and the homes in which they live, yet compared with what needs doing little has been done.

There is more than a suspicion that the picture palaces have much to answer for in

## HOME LIFE

familiarizing young minds at an impressionable age with the seamy side of life. I enter into no general denunciation of the picture palace, which has in it great possibilities of a recreative, social and educational character. I refer to its dangers which are only too apparent (judging from actual experience). Scenes of crime, clever thieving, embezzlement, murders, and of strained and unwholesome situations form a not inconsiderable part of the programme of many picture houses. Police court missionaries and magistrates have borne testimony which calls for serious consideration, and the recent serious outbreak of juvenile crime has been traced, amongst other things, to doubtful cinema pictures and to lack of religious education.

The child who has the misfortune not to be brought up in a good home, where it can from the first learn healthy religious principles, is a loss to the nation's life.

The Incarnation ennobles the morning of life and has been for nineteen hundred years the appeal of God to men to give to the morn of life its natural blessedness. The angels acknowledged the veiled Godhead, even so our Lord says that the angels of the children do always behold the face of His Father Who is

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

in Heaven. He would teach us the beauty and sacredness of infancy. The appeal of the Child Jesus has haunted the imagination and inspired efforts for child redemption ever since.

The power of a healthy religion is needed as part of a home training. People, who for various reasons prefer only secular instruction to be given in day schools, say that it is a mistake to "force" religion in a child. The attempt to "force" religion would indeed be a mistake, if such a thing were possible. As it is, we cannot do so, as a child has a natural capacity for religion, and that capacity must be allowed its due natural development. You would be surprised if any one argued that it would be a mistake to force food on a child and that it would set them against bread and butter afterwards. Spiritual faculties are there, and they will remain in germ only or become atrophied if they do not find their appropriate food and exercise. If children were kept ignorant of the principles of religion, and their lives never hallowed by prayer or touched by worship, what spiritual development could be expected? Yet there are those who would compel a child to learn secular things and at the same time be lenient itself if the children did not want to spend

## HOME LIFE

two hours at church and Sunday School on Sunday.

There is a lesson here for fathers. There is no greater work for you in life than the sympathetic and careful guidance of your children. There is in fatherhood a distinct revelation of the fatherhood of God. Boys grow up to do much that their fathers do and to adopt similar methods of thought and judgment. A boy climbing a steep mountain in the Alps, said, "Be careful where you tread, father, for I am just behind you." That is really what every lad (unconsciously it may be) is saying.

The home is the bedrock foundation of life. The family and not the individual is the unit of mankind. To regard the individual as the unit in human life is to invite anarchy and innumerable social ills. We come into the world as sons and daughters, and discipline and education are inevitable to that condition. In the home there are already those relationships, opportunities of service, duty and sacrifice which find a larger field in society. There we serve our apprenticeship for the wider fields of activity outside. Bishop Westcott said, "Heroes cannot save a country where the idea of the family is degraded." We must

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

therefore uphold the home ideal for the people of our country.

The children of to-day may have to fight the battle of the home more fiercely than we have to do ; but if we do not defend the home to-day the efforts of those who realize its value will be so much the more difficult, if not hopeless, in the future. We are too much given in England to letting things slide. Are the children of to-day to be unprepared to deal with all those forces which menace the home and religion to-day—forces of greed and unsound economics ? Are home life and Sunday worship to be sacrificed to money making and to the glamour of the public house ?

The homes and the children in the homes are the nation's greatest treasures, more valuable than all the gold of South Africa or the pearls of India. The loss of that affection for home, expressed in the most touching of our old English ballads, would be the greatest loss our nation could suffer.

Love of home is the source of all patriotic and social virtues. It is that which makes nations strong and pure, and rears a valiant manhood and a gracious womanhood.

Many things may be on the brink of change. The increasing years, and the change of out-

## HOME LIFE

look due to the war, may bring about a momentous alteration in social and national life—the birth of new institutions, the growth of new ideas, an expansion of empire and of commerce—but some things cannot change without grave loss to a country's life, and “ Love of Home ” is one.

Home ! There is no haven of refuge, when the day's work is over, like the home. There the men of business and the sons of toil can go in and shut the door, finding repose and joy, in the easy conversation of the home. There each can look frankly into the eyes of the other, and know that misunderstandings need have no place and soul can read soul, and eyes can be lighted up with the delight of the same joys, even though at times they are wet with the tears of the same sorrows.

Whatever betide us as a nation, may God avert the direst calamity which could befall this country—the loss of good and pure homes, where the children may be trained to enter into their great heritage and equipped for the strenuousness of the great days which lie before them.

## VI

### THE NATION'S REGENERATION

“How shall this man save us?”—I SAMUEL x. 27.

WE have been considering what our national and individual ideals for the future should be. We have seen that Church and nation need prophets to call both to reality and sincerity, and to truer standards of life and action. We need the ministry of the prophet to help us to distinguish between the symbol and the thing symbolized, and to get things into their right lights and proportions. We need their insight to see what things matter most and to revise, in consequence, our standard of values.

We have seen how far nations have departed from the best ideals and the standards of the greatest of the prophets.

We have seen the breakdown of a civilization which would not listen to the prophets of yesterday or to-day. A civilization based on

## THE NATION'S REGENERATION

love of wealth and comfort, a civilization of enlightened or unenlightened selfishness is certain to break down. These were the gods we were worshipping. The wealthy were envied as being possessed of all that made life worth living, while others were craving for these things, as if they were the whole of life. The wealthy possessed what everybody was wanting and only the few could obtain. England and Germany were great rivals in the pursuit of wealth.

In addition to this material god, we have another god before whom the intellect was called to bow, "Evolution." It was pressed into the service of much of the socialistic propaganda in our industrial towns. Evolution, they were told, explained the whole course and phenomena of the universe. It implied progress in nature and the history of man. The world was, according to its law, growing necessarily better and wiser. It rendered any belief in the Providence of God, or any theory of the Divine education of the race, unnecessary, if not absurd.

There were others who thought that "Evolution" was not sufficiently rapid in its methods, and to them the god which was to bring them out of bondage was "Revolution."

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

The only means of gaining social justice was to plunge society into chaos and revolution. These men preached the doctrine of force as fiercely as any. The nations had broken the first two commandments. They had set up other gods than the One Who said, "I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have none other gods but Me," and they had made graven images, before which they had fallen down and worshipped.

As for Christ, these worshippers of gold, force, evolution and comfort were saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." He was once again the "despised and rejected of men." "There was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him."

The world has not yet learned who can save it. This catastrophe is not the result of any attempt to follow the spirit of Christianity as it is found in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the outcome of national standards far removed from the spirit of Him Who urged upon the world the strongest self-restraint when He told us to turn the other cheek to the smiter and to be merciful even as our Father in Heaven is merciful.

If, then, England and Europe are to be saved, it is a new spirit which is needed, and

## THE NATION'S REGENERATION

the message of the Church at this time is that the magic which can save the world lies all the time in the life, the teaching and Personality of the Son of Man. In that is an influence and strength which can re-create the world.

Every nation of Europe needs to be born again to new ideals and renewed with new powers and fresh vitality, if the diseases that threaten her and the nations of which she is composed are to be averted. Beyond the clash of arms and any decisions they may achieve, the inrush of new spiritual power is needed if the equilibrium of civilization is to be restored in such a way as to leave it less open to forces which would destroy it again.

We need not ask whether civilization is worth saving. Great Britain and her Allies are fighting in the conviction that it is, and they are realizing that it must be for a better civilization than any nation has yet known or attempted. That is the only thing that can reconcile us to the cost in life and in anguished and broken hearts. To secure a civilization in which a real freedom can exist, and in which the principle of nationality shall have its place is the ambition of the allied powers, and it is the only ambition which can justify the loss in this stupendous conflict.

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

This principle of nationality, especially when we consider its relation to the coloured races, will involve problems of practical difficulty when the war is over. How, and in what spirit are they to be approached? There will be our own domestic problems connected with drink and the housing of the poor. There will be international problems of the first magnitude, pressing for settlement more urgently than ever and under circumstances of international division and confusion unparalleled in human history.

Can any of these be approached with any hope for the future, if each nation or any of the nations will only seek to view them from the standpoint of expediency or selfishness?

Christ is standing before the warring nations of Europe to-day offering Himself as the solution of their troubles and the one certain Hope of their future.

He gave to the world principles and powers which proved to be a new and regenerating force in a world dying of exhaustion. What His Church accomplished in the old days she can do to-day, if she is alive to her mission. The Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save.

How can this Man save us? He will not

## THE NATION'S REGENERATION

provide us with any ready-made scheme worked out in detail, by which a new and perfect world may be constructed. His religion aims at the regeneration of human society through personal character. It is not perhaps so apparently attractive a method as many we have tried or as some methods which certain sections of opinion put their trust in, but it would be far more fruitful if generally attempted.

We have but to reflect that there have been many great political measures passed into law which have completely failed to fulfil the expectations of their authors, to see that legislation sometimes, at least, creates more problems than it solves. Much legislation on which high hopes were set has resulted quite differently from what was expected, touching only the fringe perhaps of the evils it dealt with, or merely removing some injustices by creating others.

(1) We have not saved the poor by the poor law. Disguise it as we will, poor law relief and poor law methods have not met the problem, much less solved it.

(2) Philanthropic effort, which in most cases, no doubt, has been well intentioned enough, has through want of wisdom and lack of method

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

often increased the evils it has sought to remedy.

(3) We had perhaps greater hopes from science, but the prophet may stand apart to-day and ask whether all the splendid prophecies of a civilization built on the results of scientific discovery have been fulfilled. The prophet told men that righteousness alone exalted a nation, while the self-confidence due to accumulated and accumulating knowledge refused to listen. We cannot under-estimate the results of scientific research and discovery, but these results, apart from just that spirit which Christ left, may make the world we live in a "hell." Scientific method and skill have made the instruments of warfare more hellish than ever, and more devilishly ingenious. The latest triumphs of man in the conquest of the air and the extension of his conquest of the sea by submarines, have had their first uses put, not to the furtherance of the spirit of brotherhood, but to slay our brother man and to carry death to sleeping cities. Mere knowledge will not save us. The old parable of Eden is true. You may eat of the tree of knowledge and lose Paradise.

(4) *Commerce* has not saved us. It was confidently asserted before the war that the

## THE NATION'S REGENERATION

commercial relationships of the world were so interwoven and intricate that it would not be to the interest of any nation to go to war. That would probably have been true if the commercial spirit had been a less selfish one. As it is, the spirit of modern commercialism is just the spirit which leads to war.

Education has not saved us. The nations at war are the most highly educated and the most enlightened. Education of itself cannot save either nations or individuals. The promoters of the Education Act of 1870 urged that vice and crime were due to ignorance, and that if only the whole population were educated the gaols would be empty and the public house would cease to attract. The history of the last forty years has not justified their prophecy, as the gaols are still full and the fascination of the public house seems as strong as ever. While all these claims have been urged about the necessity of secular education, the need for religious education has been correspondingly slighted. Education without religious principle may make clever men, but it has no inherent power to make them either good or great.

(5) Lastly, there were others who as confidently predicted that the Gospel of brother-

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

hood had been so successfully preached amongst the working classes of Germany, France and England that this alone would make war impossible. Yet we see socialists fighting, with apparent willingness, on every front.

The one thing the nations have not tried is the rule of Christ. Even the Church has failed. We have admired Christ, sung hymns about Him, talked about Him, but we have never really trusted Him.

How shall this Man save us? As individuals, by dwelling within to re-make us into His image. Loyalty and devotion to Him is a purifying fire consuming what is mean and base and inspiring us to overcome temptation.

He saves us by breaking the power of sin, which is selfishness, and selfishness is the root of all misery.

He saves us by being the supreme example of the highest form of courage, by purity of life, and by offering us the best ideals.

He saves us by giving us hope for the future and calling us to new heights of resolution.

He saves us individually by offering us ideals of service. His ideal of life is not to "get" but to "give." He is presented to us as the type and inspiration of human life.

If we accept Him, it would mean that nations

## THE NATION'S REGENERATION

everywhere would really care about the welfare of other nations. Wealth, under Christian conditions, would be the means to the best sort of living, giving to each the opportunity of being his best self. We should wish to see all nations of the world improving. It would not weaken the national spirit for, to adapt some words of St. John the Apostle, if we have not found the heart to love our own country which we have seen, how can we love the other nations of the world which we have not seen? Christian patriotism does not mean that we love our country and hate others. It means that we long to see our own country take a great and worthy place in the history of the world and in the onward march of the human race. In the Christian spirit, each nation will say, "I am among you as He that serveth."

All the principles of our Lord Jesus Christ make for individual and national character, and mean that national regeneration is to be aimed at through that avenue of effort.

Christ left us a new Spirit in the power of which we were to deal with each other and carry on the varied interests of life. We need rebaptizing with that Spirit, that we may make self-respecting and useful citizens, strengthen

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

character, educate the conscience and give a stronger and purer tone to life.

There are those who seem to think that society would be saved if a greater measure of comfort and income were secured to the general mass of the population. The material re-construction of society would not of itself accomplish a great deal. Nations and individuals are only saved by earnestness, the sense of duty, the readiness to do and be their best, and the Spirit of Christ calls for frank justice and mutual consideration and respect. That Spirit is the only Hope of the future, and as men yield to it they will be drawn together in the union of love for service and the redemption of the world.

The war itself is showing us that we can only be saved by self-sacrifice and service. The existence and destiny of our country is at stake and it can only be preserved by hundreds of thousands counting their lives not dear unto themselves and by an equal multitude giving the best of their energy to their country's cause. These great lessons of self-sacrifice and service are the lessons which the Church has always been teaching. Splendid as the evidence of them is to-day, we need them for the future. They should be available

## THE NATION'S REGENERATION

in times of peace as well as in times of war. We want heroes in peace as well as in war.

To-day, then, we have the problem and the opportunity. There is a world to be redeemed, on the one hand, and the Church of Christ on the other. The dying multitudes and the self-sacrificing Christ, the dying multitudes and the power of regeneration. Is the Church going to be equal to the task? Is she so indwelt by the Spirit of Christ that she will work with a quick-burning enthusiasm and sympathy? Are we, as members of the Church, doing our part to introduce the new Spirit which the world so sorely needs?

Christ accepted the Cross to assure and convince the world for all time of the need of this Spirit in all ages. Whenever we see unselfish love in the world, in the mother for the home, in husband and wife in their love for each other, you see this Spirit of the Christ, but the supreme manifestation of self-sacrificing love is in the Cross. Here you see the Love of God all in flame! Here is the Burnt Sacrifice! Here is the bush-burning which is not consumed! Here is a Love deep as the sea, bright as the Heavens, and majestic as the Everlasting Hills!

More of the manifestation of that Love is

## THE NATION'S NEED OF PROPHETS

needed in our own lives. Why are we so afraid to trust it? Is it that we fear He will be a disappointment to us, as He was to the people of old? He does not indeed come to fill our coffers with gold, or to bring ease and softness into life; but He calls men to high and unselfish service and to do right in scorn of consequences.

Go to Him and ask Him to help you to grasp the Reality of His Spirit, that as a member of this Church and Realm you may carry that Spirit into the world helping on the work of Redemption, doing your part of His healing work in this world of tears and anxiety, wounded and torn as it is, that at last it may stand reborn and redeemed in the Presence of the Everlasting God!

---

*Printed for* ROBERT SCOTT, *Publisher, 7, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C., by*  
BUTLER & TANNER, FROTH.

THEOLOGY LIBRARY  
CLAREMONT, CALIF.





X  
133  
33  
3  
Screeton, Frederick Alexander.  
The nation's need of prophets / by F.A. Sc  
ton. -- London : R. Scott, 1917.  
v, 73p. ; 20cm.

6 sermons.

1. Church of England--Sermons. I. Title.

CCSC/mmb

A26407

